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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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G-2 Report 6890

GREECE (Military)

Subject: Apprehension of Greece in reference to reports of Bulgaria's fortifying the Bulgar-Greek Frontier.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAR 2 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

768.74115/47

Considerable apprehension in the War Ministry of Greece has occurred recently with demands for surveys of the Greek-Bulgar frontier with a view to strengthening frontier units and constructing needed defensive works at critical points, in order to counter Bulgaria's activity in strengthening her southern frontier and the alarm from the increasing strength of the Bulgarian Army.

It is reported in Greece that Bulgaria at present has a force of 2500 officers and 45,000 men, while the Neuilly Treaty limits her to 20,000 men. It is said also that the Bulgarian government reported to the League of Nations recently a force of 1433 officers and 32,401 men, considerably in excess of the treaty quota.

Bulgaria's reported strength by units

The Infantry, treaty limit of 8 regiments of 3 battalions each, has been increased to 8 divisions of 3 regiments each, with telegraph and radio sections, special gas and machine-gun units, and the Army intendance service. The war strength is reported to be twice the peace strength.

Cavalry: At present the cavalry is reported at 11 regiments, one of which is a Royal Guard regiment, while the treaty accords but 3 regiments.

Artillery: Each division has a regiment of mixed artillery of 3 battalions of 2 batteries each. There are also 2 regiments of horse artillery and 9 battalions of heavy artillery, the bulk being 155 m/m howitzers. The total reported is 32 batteries of field and mountain artillery, 8 batteries of horse artillery, and 18 batteries of heavy. In all, 58 batteries against the treaty allowance of 15 batteries - 12 of field and 3 of mountain.

Gendarmery: Is reported as composed of 16 battalions, the 1st and 2nd battalions of which, located at Sofia, have been converted into a school for Reserve officers where it is aimed to train 1800 Reserve officers annually.

Frontier, Forestry, and Custom Guards are reported as totalling 10,000 men, a force available for augmenting the regular military force.

From: M/A Belgrade (Athens) Report No. 3763 February 27, 1935

G-2 Report

Air Force: It is reported that Bulgaria has approximately 100 military planes and that she is operating at present two airplane factories under Italian directors. The Greeks contend that the Neuilly Treaty forbids the formation of an air force by Bulgaria.

Comment:

The military circles in Greece have expressed a growing apprehension as to their country's defenses on the northeastern frontier and they feel that Bulgaria's designs on the panhandle of Greece are reaching the point where some counter measures must be set up.

Source:
Athens Press and contacts.

F. L. WHITLEY,
Lt. Colonel, Inf.,
Military Attache.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

763.7415/43

SEE 868.7961/28 FOR #2843

FROM France (Cochran) DATED June 22, 1936

TO NAME 1—1127 ...

REGARDING: Greek Notice to Aerial Navigators No.46 concerning the closing of the Komotino-Karakas Corridor for crossing the Greco-Bulgarian frontier.

Copy of -.

Wi

2843

No. Paris, June 22, 1936

Subject: Air Flight Regulation in Greece

768.7415

The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

In accordance with the Department's instruction No. 1571 of March 1, 1933, relative to reporting changes in air navigation laws or regulations of foreign countries, I have the honor to enclose a signed copy in French, together with copies in English translation of NOTICE TO AERIAL NAVIGATORS No. 46 of the Greek Ministry of Air, concerning the abolition of the Komotini-Karakas Corridor for crossing the Greco-Bulgarian frontier.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:

(signed) H. MERLE COCHRAN
H. Merle Cochran
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:
1. Greek Ministry of Air notice, 6/6/36 (in single copy).
2. Translation of Enclosure No. 1.
In quintuplicate
879.6 SH/hfe

Enclo. 1 filed in Dept. of State

Enclosure No. 2 to despatch No. 2843
of June 22. 1936 -
from the Embassy at Paris

(Translation)

Kingdom of Greece
Ministry of Air
Civil Aviation Service
Section "C"

No. 2734 Athens, June 6, 1936.

Notice to Aerial Navigators No. 46/1936

Corridors for Crossing the Greco-Bulgarian Frontier

Abolition of Corridor: KOMOTINI-KARAKAS.

A. The Corridor for crossing the Greco-Bulgarian frontier which follows along the route Komotini-Karakas is abolished beginning today.

B. Aeronautic Maps of Greece. The preceding information concerns page No. 3 "RODOPI" of the Map of Greece, scale 1: 400,000th, which should be accordingly modified.

C. Aerial Guide of Greece. The preceding information likewise concerns Map No. 2. "Northern Greece" as well as Chapter II, paragraph I "Corridors for Crossing Frontiers," page II.5 (corridors for crossing the Greco-Bulgarian frontiers - Corridor "C") which will be amended in due course.

The Director

D. Photopoulos

(SEAL)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 1938
DIVISION OF
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

G-2 Report

GREECE (COMBAT-ASSIGNED)

Subject: Land Frontiers and Interior Defense Systems

Fortifications along land frontiers

1. All the land frontiers of Greece are in the north and constitute a single continuous line separating Greece from the following countries (in order from west to East): Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, European Turkey.

2. The entire region is mountainous and undeveloped, making the frontier passable only where there are roads. Of these there are but few.

3. During the past two years, Greece has undertaken to fortify this long frontier line to the extent indicated below.

a. Fronting ALBANIA: Nothing except a few field works E and SE of Coritza. These installations are motivated by fear of possible Italian invasion via Albania.

b. Fronting YUGOSLAVIA: Nothing.

c. Fronting European TURKEY: Nothing.

d. Fronting BULGARIA: Here a real effort has been made. Greece fears Albania only as a route for Italy. She retains only a dormant suspicion of Yugoslavia as concerns the possibility of the latter's descending upon Thessaloniki. With Turkey she is not only at long last at peace but actually and closely allied. But as to Bulgaria, Greece suspects the worst and is in perpetual state of alarm.

The Greek provinces fronting on Burgaria are from W to E: eastern Macedonia and practically all of Thrace. Bulgaria claims most of this territory as rightfully hers, racially, but her real reason for wanting it is to have an outlet on the Aegean so as to escape the encompassing restrictions of the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles.

The Greek plan of defense is in general as follows:
(1) Hold in Macedonia
(2) Delay in Thrace

This is solved respectively:
(1) By fortifying the general line STRUMA VALLEY-XANTHI-PORTO LAGOS
(2) By stationing an Army Corps at DEDEAGACH (ALEXANDRIANOPLE), identity and strength unknown.

763.74155/49

This force would fight a delaying action in Thrace, thereby leaving the Bulgarians open to attack in flank and rear by the Turks. It appears that in the existing Turko-Greek defensive alliance, Turkey disclaims all interest in Thrace other than to help keep Bulgaria out of there.

The BULGAR-GREEK frontier is crossed (from W to E) by the following roads:

(1) Struma Valley Road through MELNIK (Bul)-RUPEL-SIDIROKASTRON-SERES
(2) NEVROKOPION (Bul)-LISHE-PROSOTSANI-DRAMA-KAVALA
(3) Frontier-ASAGHI-ROUSKOVO-MOKROS-DRAMA
(4) BAZKOVO (Bul)-BALIK (Bul)-EHINOS-XANTHI-KAVALA
(5) KARAKAS (Bul)-KOMOTINI (KOMULDCHINA)-DEDEAGACH (ALEXANDRIANOPLE)

These roads are none too good anywhere and are especially poor on the Bulgarian side. Nevertheless any military expedition must come along one or more of these roads as the mountains make passage of the frontier impossible to large forces any where else.

On a clear day, the Aegean can be seen from many points on the frontier. From the mouth of the Struma east to Turkey the frontier is never more than 45 miles from the sea (from Xanthi to Dedeagach it is less than 30 miles from the sea; in the vicinity of Lake Lagos only 15).

These two considerations: few roads and shallow distance from frontier to sea have had two corresponding general effects on the fortified line STRUMA VALLEY-XANTHI-PORTO LAGOS:

(1) The line, as a fortification, lacks depth.
(2) The fortifications are concentrated near the roads.

The fortifications have been completed or at least are nearly so. In general, they are patterned after the Maginot Line in France: sunken batteries, sunken MG pill-boxes, underground shelter for troops; everything done in reinforced concrete, the whole covered by an anti-aircraft defensive system. The fortifications are concentrated at the following places:

RUPEL, on Road (1) above (NB: There were fortifications there that figured prominently in the Balkan War of 1913)
LISHE, on Road (2) above
TOUNOUBAR, not identified on map in this office, but presumably on or near Road (3) above
An undetermined place a short distance north of XANTI, on Road (4) above
Vicinity of LAKE LAGOS.

In general support: The 4th Corps (2 Divs), Hq at KAVALA.

Comment by M/A: Against the objection that this line is too shallow, it is offered that it is probably strong enough to hold at the only points at which it can be attacked because the poor communications make any overwhelming concentration of force against these points practically impossible.

E. VILLARET
Lt. Colonel, CAC,
Military Attache.

Source:
Contacts
Study of map

Central File: Decimal File 768.7415, Political Relations Of States, Relations; Bi-Lateral Treaties., Political., Greece And Bulgaria, Boundary Questions. Composition Of Differences., June 22, 1936 - APRIL 18, 1938. June 22, 1936 - April 18, 1938. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111391221%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 21 June 2025.